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Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----------115913 011515Z /47
O 011420Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4907
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 1080

EXDIS

ALSO FOR AID FOR ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR WHELLER
FROM PICKERING

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, EAID, JO, US, IS , XF
SUBJECT: MAQARIN AND THE CONGRESS

1. WE UNDERSTAND THAT SHORTLY WE WILL BE INVOLVED IN TESTIMONY ON FY80 AID LEGISLATION WHICH WILL REQUIRE DISCUSSION OF MAQARIN AND THE PRESENT STATE OF PLAY ON WATER RIGHTS.

2. YOU WILL RECALL THAT AT PRESENT WE HAVE AN ISRAELI REQUEST FOR DIRECT TECHNICAL TALKS WITH JORDAN WITH A STATEMENT THAT IF SUCH TECHNICAL TALKS GO AHEAD ISRAELIS WOULD BE PREPARED TO AGREE WITH PROVISION OF 25 MCM FOR THE ADASIYA TRIANGLE FROM MAQARIN, WITH A RESERVATION THAT THEY WOULD WISH TO DISCUSS A LARGER NUMBER IF AND WHEN A SECOND DAM IS BUILT. THE JORDANIAN POSITION HAS BEEN THAT THEY WILL AGREE TO PROVIDE 25 MCM UNDER MAQARIN AT THE TIME AND PLACE THE ISRAELIS WISH, AND ALSO TO ALLOW THE ISRAELIS TO EXPLOIT THE CONSIDERABLE EXCESS WHICH WILL NORMALLY BE

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AVAILABLE FROM FLOODS IN THE WINTER SEASON, IN WHATEVER WAY ISRAEL WISHES, WITHOUT ACCEPTING A LEGAL OBLIGATION ON THE PART OF JORDAN TO PROVIDE SUCH ADDITIONAL WATER FOR THE FUTURE. TECHNICAL TALKS AT THE PRESENT TIME ARE NOT POSSIBLE FOR WHAT ARE ESSENTIALLY POLITICAL REASONS ON THE JORDANIAN SIDE. WE DO NOT HOWEVER EXCLUDE SUCH

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HAPPENING IN THE RELATIVELY NEAR FUTURE, PARTICULARLY
IF SOME SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS IS MADE IN THE ON-GOING
WORK IN THE EGYPT-ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS ON THE
DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES AND IN OTHER AREAS WHICH
MIGHT BE RELEVANT TO JORDAN JOINING IN AT SOME POINT
IN THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS.

3. OUR PROBLEM WILL BE TO CONVEY TO THE CONGRESS
AN HONEST APPRECATION OF THE CURRENT SITUATION
SO THAT THEY CAN MAKE JUDGMENTS ABOUT MAQARIN IN
LIGHT OF THAT SITUATION.

4. IN THIS CONNECTION, WE HOPE IT WILL BE POSSIBLE
TO DISCUSS THE ISSUE WITH THE CONGRESS AS FOLLOWS.

-- WITH RESPECT TO THE MAQARIN DAM, EACH OF THE
PARTIES CONCERNED HAS ACCEPTED THE FACT THAT
TERRITORY IN SIRAEL LYING BETWEEN LAKE TIBERIUS,
THE JORDAN RIVER, AND THE YARMOUK RIVER (THE
YARMOUK TRIANGLE) HAS A RIGHT TO WATER FROM THE
YARMOUK RIVER.

-- PAST STUDIES AND REPORTS, INCLUDING THE VERY
IMPORTANT JOHNSTON PLAN STUDY, INDICATED 25 MILLION
CUBIC METERS WOULD BE AN APPROPRIATE FIGURE.

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-- WE HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH BOTH PARTIES, EXERCISING
INFORMAL GOOD OFFICES IN AN EFFORT TO WORK OUT
WATER RIGHTS QUESTIONS IN CONNECTION WITH THE
CONSTRUCTION OF THE MAQARIN DAM. WHILE FULL AGREE-
MENT ON THIS HAS NOT BEEN ACHIEVED, WE HAVE REASON
TO BELIEVE, PENDING THE WORKING OUT OF ADDITIONAL
TECHNICAL DETAILS, THAT SUCH AGREEMENT CAN BE
REACHED IN THE RELATIVELY NEAR FUTURE.

-- IN PARTICULAR, BOTH SIDES HAVE INDICATED AN
APPRECIATION OF THE NEEDS OF THE OTHER AND WE
ARE REASONABLY CONFIDENT THAT THE JOHNSTON PLAN
FIGURE CAN FORM A BASIS FOR FINAL AGREEMENT. IN THIS
CONTEXT, JORDAN HAS TOLD US IT IS WILLING TO RESPECT THE WATER
RIGHTS OF ALL PARTIES.

-- WE BELIEVE THERE IS A GOOD CHANCE THAT AGREE-
MENT CAN BE WORKED OUT WELL BEFORE CURRENTLY
ON-GOING ENGINEERING STUDIES ARE FINISHED AND
ACTUAL CONSTRUCTION WILL HAVE TO BEGIN ON THE
PROJECT. IN THE PAST, ALL PROJECTS FINANCED
BY THE UNITED STATES IN THE JORDAN VALLEY HAVE

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TAKEN FULL ACCOUNT OF AND RESPECT FOR THE
JOHNSTON PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS WITH RESPECT TO THE
WATER RIGHTS OF THE PARTIES INVOLVED. WE WILL
CONTINUE TO FOLLOW THAT POLICY.

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S E C R E T FINAL SECTION OF 02 AMMAN 1080

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5. WE BELIEVE THE FOLLOWING DIFFICULT QUESTIONS
MIGHT ARISE AND WE PROVIDE A SUGGESTED ANSWER:

QUESTION: WHAT WILL YOU DO IN THE EVEN AGREE-
MENT CANNOT BE REACHED?

ANSWER: AS I HAVE SAID, WE ARE OPTIMISTIC THAT
AGREMENT CAN BE REACHED AND WE HAVE SUBMITTED
A REQUEST FOR FUNDS THIS YEAR ON THAT BASIS.
IF SATISFACTORY ARRANGEMENTS CANNOT BE ARRIVED AT
FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE UNITED STATES,
THEN WE WOULD HAVE TO DELAY THE PROJECT OR MAKE
A FURTHER DECISION WITH REGARD TO THE USE OF THE
FUNDS IN ACCORDANCE WITH EXISTING LEGISLATION.

QUESTION: IS IT TRUE THAT JORDAN HAS REFUSED TO
MEET WITH ISRAEL FACE-TO-FACE TO DISCUSS THIS
ISSUE AND THAT IS WHAT IS HOLDING UP PROGRESS?

ANSWER: THE ISRAELIS HAVE TOLD US THEY WOULD LIKE TO
DISCUSS THIS MATTER DIRECTLY WITH THE JORDANIANS.
THE JORDANIANS HAVE CONSIDERED THIS REQUEST AND
BELIEVE THAT THE PROBLEM CAN BE RESOLVED THROUGH
THE CONTINUED USE OF UNITED STATES GOOD OFFICES. WE ARE IN

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CONTINUING CONTACT WITH BOTH PARTIES IN AN EFFORT TO RESOLVE THIS DIFFERENCE OF OPINION WHICH WE BELIEVE CAN BE BRIDGED. (PREFERENCE WOULD BE TO PROVIDE THE ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION IN CLASSIFIED FORM, EITHER IN WRITING OR IN CLOSED SESSION, RATHER THAN IN PUBLIC TESTIMONY.)

QUESTION: ISN'T IT TRUE THAT ISRAEL REXPECTS SOMETHING LIKE 40 MCM FROM JORDAN AND THAT JORDAN HAS REFUSED THIS REQUEST?

ANSWER: WE BELIEVE FROM OUR CONTACT WITH BOTH SIDES, PENDING ADDITIONAL CLARIFICATION OF TECHNICAL DETAILS WHICH ARE THEMSELVES IMPORTANT, THAT AGREEMENT CAN BE REACHED ON A FIGURE OF 25 MCM. BOTH SIDES HAVE HAD DIFFERENCES OF VIEW AND BOTH HAVE INDICATED A WILLINGNESS TO COMPROMISE.

QUESTION: CAN THE PROJECT BE CONSTRUCTED AND OPERATED WITHOUT THE CONSTRUCTION OF A DIVERSION WEIR FOR DIRECTING THE WATER INTO THE EAST GHOR CANAL?

ANSWER: YES. THE CONSTRUCTION OF A WEIR WOULD HOWEVER PREVENT A WASTE OF THE WATER RESOURCES, PARTICULARLY DURING THE DRY MONTHS.

QUESTION: IF THE PROJECT IS CONSTRUCTED WITHOUT THE DIVERSION WEIR AND AFTER THE MAQARIN RESERVIOR IS FILLED, WOULD STREAM FLOW TO THE YARMOUK TRIANGLE BE DECREASED FROM NORMAL FLOWS PRIOR TO THE PROJECT BEING CONSTRUCTED?

ANSWER: NO. WE BELIEVE IT VERY LIKELY THAT THE DRY PERIOD FLOW WOULD BE INCREASED BECAUSE OF WATER RELEASES FROM MAQARIN RESERVIOR.

QUESTION: IF A DIVERSION WEIR IS CONSTRUCTED, HOW WOULD RELEASES BE DETERMINED?

ANSWER: THE JORDANIANS FELL THAT WATER RELEASE CAN BE PROGRAMMED BASED ON THE KNOWN IMPOUNDMENT

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OF WATER IN THE MAQARIN RESERVIOR AND ESTIMATED INFLOWS INTO THE YARMOUK RIVER BELOW THE DAM, EQUATED TO THE IMTED WATER REQUIREMENTS OF THE EAST GHOR CANAL AND THE YARMOUK TRIANGLE.

6. ABOVE TALKING POINTS GENERALLY FOLLOW LINE WHICH WE DISCUSSED INFORMALLY WITH AMBASSADOR LEWIS WHEN HE WAS HERE LAST WEEKEND. GIVEN FACT THAT TESTIMONY MAY BEING AS EARLY AS NEXT WEEK WE WOULD HOPE FOR EARLIEST RESPONSE FROM TEL AVIV ON ABOVE SUGGESTED HANDLING OF THE ISSUE AND ITS ATTENDANT PROBLEMS.
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